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Fact Sheet

Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006 Facts on Learning Limitations

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Facts on Learning Limitations

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The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) is a national survey funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and conducted by Statistics Canada that is designed to collect information on adults and children who have an activity limitation, that is, whose everyday activities are limited because of a condition or health problem.

The following fact sheet is a profile of Canadians 15 years of age and older, who reported having a learning limitation. The respondents' answers to the limitation questions represent their perception of the situation and are therefore subjective. This fact sheet examines education, employment, help received, aids and assistive devices, and Internet usage for those with a learning limitation. While the information provided in this fact sheet pertains to adults, a brief overview of children with learning limitations is also provided.

It should be noted that while the main focus of this fact sheet is on people with learning limitations, the majority of the population with a learning condition has one or more other limitations. This should be considered when interpreting the results since the effects of the learning condition cannot be isolated. In addition, the terms learning condition and learning limitation are used interchangeably in this profile.

For more information, please refer to the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Technical and Methodological Report (see 89-628-X 2007002).

Demographics

In 2006, approximately 631,000 (2.5%) Canadians aged 15 years and older reported having a learning limitation. Learning limitations may be the result of a variety of conditions, such as attention problems, hyperactivity, and dyslexia. Learning limitations also vary in their severity. Just over one in five (22.4%) with learning limitations were considered to have severe learning limitations, while the remainder (77.6%) were regarded as mild.

Rates of learning limitations evenly distributed amongst age groups

Rates of learning limitations were similar across all age groups of adults (table 1), illustrating the lifelong nature of this limitation. Men and women were nearly equally as likely to report having a learning condition (52.0% versus 48.0%).

Table 1
Learning limitations by age group, 2006

| Age groups | Total Population | Population with learning | Total learning |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| | | limitations | |
| | number | | % |
| Total – aged 15 and over | 25,422,280 | 631,030 | 2.5 |
| 15 to 24 | 4,147,070 | 102,680 | 2.5 |
| 25 to 34 | 3,942,260 | 78,400 | 2.0 |
| 35 to 44 | 4,747,620 | 115,360 | 2.4 |
| 45 to 54 | 4,912,800 | 122,390 | 2.5 |
| 55 to 64 | 3,623,390 | 111,550 | 3.1 |
| 65 to 74 | 2,239,630 | 45,540 | 2.0 |
| 75 and older | 1,809,500 | 55,120 | 3.0 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Children with learning limitations

In 2006, a limitation related to learning affected 121,080 children aged 5 to 14. This represents 3.2% of all children aged 5 to 14 in Canada. Learning conditions (69.3%) were reported most often among those with one or more limitations. A learning limitation is defined as a difficulty learning because of a condition, such as attention problems, hyperactivity, or dyslexia.

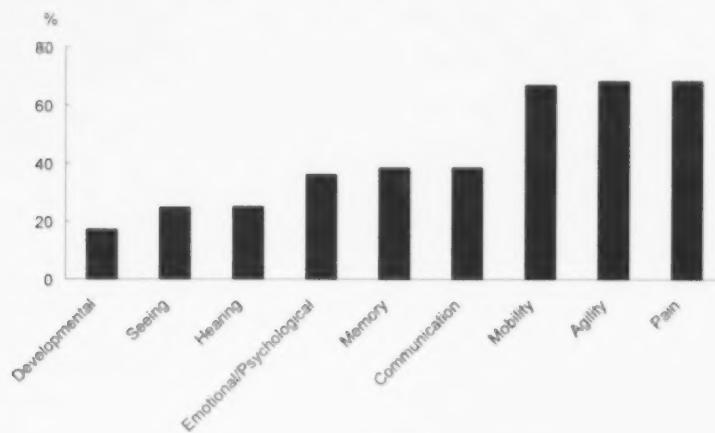
Learning conditions were the leading types of activity limitations reported for boys within this age group, with 4.1% of all boys experiencing a learning limitation. Comparatively, 2.2% of girls aged 5 to 14 also experienced a learning limitation (see 89-628-X 2007002).

In 2006, 94.5% of children with a learning limitation were enrolled in school. Learning limitations are not always apparent until a child begins school and these difficulties are often diagnosed within the school setting. In 2006, nearly 9 in 10 children (89.6%) with limitations needing special education or attending a special school required the special education because of a learning condition (see 89-628-X 2008004).

Multiple limitations

Of all the people who indicated that they had a learning limitation, 5.6% (35,160) stated that it was their sole condition, while 94.4% (595,880) indicated that they had multiple limitations. Problems with mobility, agility, or pain were the most prevalent conditions in those reporting a learning condition (chart 1).

Chart 1
Common limitations paired with learning limitations, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Education

In April 2006, 13.9% (73,520) of people with a learning limitation aged 15 to 64, regardless of severity, were enrolled in a school or a university, with 81.8% attending on a full time basis. Three-quarters of the 73,520 persons in school were between the ages of 15 and 24. This age group had the highest rate of attendance with over half (53.7%) reporting enrollment.

Highest level of education attainment

In 2006, one-third of people with a learning limitation had an education beyond a high school diploma. Specifically, 14.7% held a college or non-university certificate or diploma, 10.6% held a trade or registered apprentice certificate, 4.4% had a bachelor's degree, and 4.0% had obtained education above a bachelor's degree.

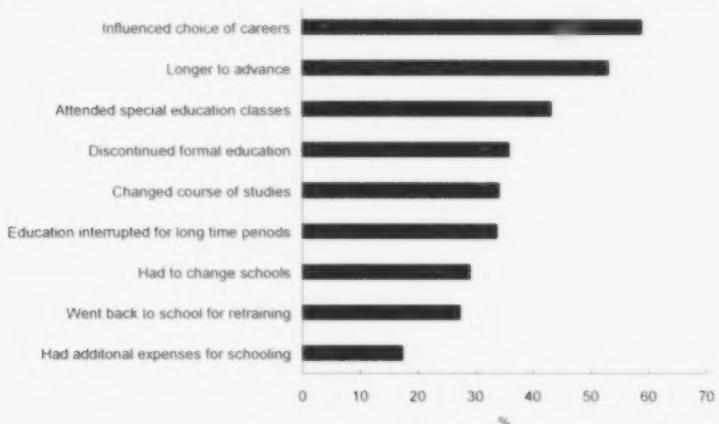
Students require tutors to assist with courses

Close to two-thirds (31.6%) of people who attended school in 2006 reported that they required an assistive device to aid them with their courses. The most common assistance required was that of a tutor or teacher's aide (59.8%). Over half of people who stated that they required this help were aged 15 to 18. Other commonly reported assistance required were modifications or adaptations to the course curriculum (42.2%), and note takers / readers (30.1%).

Impact of condition on education

The results of the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey indicate that having a learning condition can affect a person's education in numerous ways (chart 2). Commonly reported impacts were influence on choice of courses and careers (59.3%), increased time to finish education (53.1%), and the necessity of attending special education classes (43.8%).

Chart 2
Effects of learning limitations on Education, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006

Employment

Labour force status varies with severity

In 2006, 34.5% of people with learning limitations aged 15 to 64 reported that they were employed. Over four in ten (42.2%) were not in the labour force, 15.3% were retired, and 7.0% stated that they were unemployed. Employment status varied significantly with the severity of the learning limitation. People with mild learning conditions were more likely to report that they were employed than those with severe learning limitations.

Table 2

Employment status of people with learning limitations by severity, 2006

| Employment status | Total learning limitations | Mild | Severe |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|------|------------------|
| percent | | | |
| Employed | 34.5 | 39.0 | 16.2 |
| Unemployed | 7.0 | 7.3 | 5.6 ^E |
| Not in the labour force | 42.2 | 38.7 | 56.2 |
| Retired | 15.3 | 14.0 | 20.7 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Employed

One-quarter of people did not disclose their condition to their employer

Approximately one in four (25.7%) employed people with a learning limitation reported that their employer did not know about their condition. People with severe learning limitations were no more likely than those with mild learning conditions to have disclosed their condition.

People with learning limitations report being limited at work

Over half (52.0%) of employed people aged 15 to 64 with a learning limitation said that their condition restricted the amount or kind of work they do at their present job. Those with severe learning conditions were nearly twice as likely as those with mild learning conditions to report being limited at work (80.4% versus 49.0%).

Modified or reduced hours most common job modifications

The most common job modification required by people with learning limitations was modified or reduced hours (28.2%). People with severe learning conditions were nearly twice as likely to report this need as were people with mild learning conditions (51.7% versus 25.8%). Another common modification required was job redesign, reported by 21.3%. Similar to modified hours, job modifications were needed more frequently by people with severe learning limitations than those with mild learning limitations (44.5% versus 18.8%).

Change and advancement difficult

A large proportion of people with learning limitations reported experiencing difficulty in career advancement. Over eight in ten (84.2%) people with a severe learning condition reported that their condition made it very difficult for them to change or advance at their present job. Even among people with mild learning limitations, over half (52.7%) experienced difficulty with advancement. Three in ten people (30.4%) with a learning condition said that the difficulty they experienced in trying to advance in their job was a result of their condition limiting the amount of hours that they could work.

Discrimination in the workplace

In 2006, almost one in five (18.0 %) people with a learning limitation reported that they had been refused a job in the previous five years because of their condition. Moreover, 13.4% of people stated that they had been refused a job interview.

The PALS data indicated that people with learning limitations also experience discrimination on the job. Over one in ten (10.7%) people stated that they had been denied a promotion as a result of their condition, 14.6% indicated that they were

^E use with caution

given less responsibility than their co-workers, 9.8% reported they received less pay than others for performing similar jobs, and 7.1% reported that their workplace did not provide them with the accommodations they needed to aid them with their learning limitation.

Unemployed

In 2006, the unemployment rate for people with learning limitations was 11.8%. Over seven in ten people with learning disabilities reported that their condition restricted the amount of work they could perform at a job. Moreover, this group also reported difficulty in looking for work. Over nine in ten (92.4%) people with severe learning conditions stated that their limitation affected their ability to look for work, in comparison to four in ten (40.9%) people with mild learning conditions.

Former employers did not know of learning condition

Approximately 42.1% of unemployed persons with learning limitations reported that their previous employer was not aware of their limitation, a proportion similar to those who were employed. As with employed persons, the proportion of previous employers who were aware did not differ by severity of the employee's limitation.

Not in the labour force

In 2006, 42.2% or approximately 206,600 people aged 15 to 64 with a learning limitation were not in the labour force. Of these people, over two-thirds (65.4% or 132,380 people) reported that they were completely prevented from working. However, over one in ten (14.5%) reported that there were modifications that could be made in the workplace that would enable them to work. In addition, 46.8% of people who were not in the labour force indicated that they planned to look for work in the next 12 months.

Barriers to looking for work

People with learning limitations identified numerous barriers which discouraged them from looking for work (Table 3). The most common was the feeling that their training (either educational or vocational) wasn't adequate enough for them to succeed at a job (28.0%). Fears of losing some or all of current income (20.5%), and losing all or some of their additional supports (18.4%) were also commonly reported.

Table 3
Barriers which discourage people with learning limitations from looking for work, 2006

| Barrier | percent |
|---|---------|
| Training is not adequate | 28.0 |
| Would lose some or all of current income | 20.5 |
| Would lose all or some of additional supports (i.e. housing or drug plan) | 18.4 |
| Have been a victim of discrimination | 18.3 |
| Worry about being isolated by other workers on the job | 16.2 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Retired

Majority of retired people with learning conditions are completely prevented from working

In 2006, 15.3% of people aged 15 to 64 with learning limitations reported that they were retired. Of these people, nearly all (95.8%) said that their condition completely prevented them from working.

Help with everyday activities

In 2006, over two-thirds (69.1%) of all people with a learning limitation stated that their condition restricted the amount or kind of activities they could do. There was a significant difference between those with mild learning conditions and those with severe learning conditions. While 60.2% of people with a mild learning condition said they were sometimes or always limited in day-to-day activities, everyone (100%) with a severe learning condition reported such restrictions.

Help with finances

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey asked people to identify activities for which they received help or for which they needed help. Six in ten (60.0%) people with severe learning limitations reported receiving help with personal finances, such as making bank transactions and paying bills. This was also the most common activity with which people with mild learning conditions required help, although the proportion was significantly lower (26.7%). Regardless of severity, of those who were receiving help with their finances in 2006, almost one in five (19.4%) said that they needed additional help with their finances.

Aids and assistive devices

Technological and organizational aids most frequently used

In 2006, one in five (20.6%) people with a learning condition reported using at least one aid to help them with their limitation. People with mild learning conditions were just as likely as those with more severe learning conditions to report using aids. Regardless of the severity of the learning condition, the aid used most frequently by individuals was home computers (83.2%; table 4).

Table 4
Aids and assistive devices used by people with learning limitations, 2006

| Aid and/or assistive device | proportion (%) |
|--|----------------|
| Home computer | 83.2 |
| Printers and scanners | 66.0 |
| Spelling and grammar checking software | 61.0 |
| Pocket organizers | 29.1 |
| Organizational software | 28.0 |
| Recording equipment | 22.8 |
| Portable spell checkers | 17.5 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

Internet use

In 2006, almost three quarters (74.5%) of people with a learning condition reported that they had used the Internet in the previous 12 months. However, people with severe learning limitations were less likely to have used the Internet compared to those with a mild limitation (63.0% versus 77.0%).

Internet improves knowledge, quality of life, and communication

Overall, 75.0% of people with learning limitations stated the Internet helped them be better informed about the world. Moreover, almost two-thirds (63.7%) of people with learning conditions also reported that using the Internet had moderately to significantly improved their quality of life.

In addition to increasing their knowledge and improving their lives, almost half (49.8%) of people with a learning limitation said that using the Internet improved their ability to reach out to people who have similar experiences or interests.

This fact sheet has highlighted key findings from the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey pertaining to learning limitations. For more information on this topic and other publications from the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey please consult <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-628-X&chropg=1&lang=eng>.

How to obtain more information

Specific inquiries about this product and related statistics or services should be directed to: Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6 by telephone: 613-951-5979 or by e-mail at sasd-dssea@statcan.gc.ca

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